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Ministry of Advanced Education
Office of the Premier

PREMIER PRESENTS EXCELLENCE AWARDS TO TOP GRADS OF 2006

VANCOUVER – Premier Gordon Campbell presented 15 B.C. high school students with Premier's Excellence Awards today, to recognize their academic achievements and outstanding community service.

"The Premier's Excellence Awards are presented to outstanding young British Columbians to recognize their achievements as students and as model citizens, and I congratulate each of them on their successes to date," Premier Campbell said. "The students we honour today inspire a sense of confidence in B.C.'s youth and their abilities to reach even higher to pursue their goals."

Each of the 2006 award winners received a scholarship for $15,000 to attend a public post-secondary institution in B.C., along with a commemorative medallion. In December 2005, the provincial government tripled the amount of the scholarships from $5,000 to $15,000 – the first time the amount of the award had been increased since it was established in 1986. To date, the awards program has distributed $1.9 million to 313 exceptional students across B.C.

"The students receiving these scholarships are the leaders of tomorrow and have already made tremendous contributions to their communities," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. "The awards will help them reach their education goals, so they can continue to make an even greater impact on our province and the world as a whole."

Premier's Excellence Awards are presented annually to honour the top all-around graduating high school student in each of B.C.'s 15 geographical college regions. Students are nominated by their high school principals and must be enrolled full-time at one of British Columbia's public post-secondary institutions. To be eligible, students must demonstrate academic excellence in grades 11 and 12 and be involved in extracurricular activities in their schools and communities.

A selection committee, including representatives from the ministries of Advanced Education, Education, and Employment and Income Assistance and from the University of Victoria, reviews the list of nominees each year, and chooses 15 students to receive the award.

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For information on AchieveBC, visit http://www.achievebc.ca online.
1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUNDER

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2006 PREMIER'S EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

Robyn Ashwell is a graduate from Highland secondary school in Comox. She received the Governor General's Medal and the Osler Shield for top all-around graduating student and the Gordon M. Shrum Scholarship from Simon Fraser University. Robyn was president of the Highland Interact Club, which raised more than $2,000 for Africa Community Technical Service, a local organization working on water projects in East Africa. She also helped raise more than $3,000 for Rotaplast, which performs free cleft lip and palate surgeries in developing countries. Robyn is studying political science and French at SFU.

Robyn Cater is a graduate from Caledonia senior secondary school in Terrace. She received the T.S. McPherson Entrance Scholarship to the University of Victoria, an award from the John Chen-Wing Caledonia Endowment Fund, the Governor General's Bronze Medal and the B.C. Innovation Council 2006 Science Achievement Award. She was a member of the Caledonia Physics Club and the Physics Olympics team, and a representative at the All Candidates Forum on Education in 2005. She also competed on her school's soccer, volleyball and track teams. Robyn is studying science at UVic and plans to be a doctor or medical researcher.

Kalena Austin de Wynter-Wilkie is a graduate from Grand Forks secondary school, and the second member of her family to win a Premier's Excellence Award. Kalena also won a Miller Thomson Foundation Scholarship, a Canada Millennium Excellence Scholarship and the B.C. Superintendents Scholarship. She played hockey in Japan as a member of Canada's 2006 Pacific Rim select team, and worked with a local youth philanthropy group called YSHIFT – or Youth Super Happy Incredibly Fun Team – to develop a skateboard park. Kalena is studying science at UVic and plans to become a pediatrician.

Jennifer Grants is a graduate from Brooks secondary school in Powell River. She won a Governor General's Award, a UVic Excellence Scholarship, a Miller Thomson Foundation National Scholarship and the Santok Sian Award. Jennifer has helped train dogs for people with disabilities through the Westcoast Animals for Community Care and Emotional Support Society, and was a volunteer peer tutor in high school and secretary of the student council. She sang with her school's chamber and jazz choirs, which she also accompanied on piano. Jennifer is studying biochemistry at UVic and plans to become a genetic researcher or university professor.

Christa Hoy is a graduate from Mount Boucherie secondary school in Westbank. Christa received a Governor General's Bronze Medal, as well as the Kelowna and District Young Female Citizen of the Year award and the Mount Boucherie Student of the Year award. She also received entrance scholarships from the University of B.C., and the Duke of Edinburgh's silver and bronze awards. She was a candystriper at Brookhaven Care Centre, founder and executive member of School District 23's student council. She excelled in sports, music and highland dance. Christa is studying human kinetics at UBC.

Jenny Hu is a graduate from Burnaby North secondary school. Jenny received a Governor General's Award, Outstanding Service Awards in grades 11 and 12, a Miller Thomson National Foundation Scholarship and the Viking Award for Leadership. She also placed third in the UBC French Writing Contest and received an award for mentorship. She was the 2005 fundraising co-ordinator for Cops for Cancer at her school, secretary to the student council, and a mentor, tutor and peacemaker for the transitions program helping Grade 8 students adjust to high school. Jenny is studying commerce at UBC and plans to become an investment banker or work in international relations.

Sabine Lague is a graduate from Mount Baker secondary school in Cranbrook. She received the City of Cranbrook memorial scholarship as the top and best all-around graduate, a Miller Thomson Foundation National Scholarship, and two UBC major entrance scholarships. Sabine worked with the Blue Lake Forest Education Society Summer Camp for four years and was a member of her school's concert band and choir. She was involved in her school's planning council and volunteered with the Prevention Against Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth program. She was also a candystriper at the East Kootenay Regional Hospital for three years. Sabine is studying science and music at UBC and plans to become a high school biology teacher.

Courtenay Landsiedel is a graduate from Robert Bateman secondary school in Abbotsford. She received the school's outstanding athlete and scholar award, a University College of the Fraser Valley entrance scholarship and a B.C. school sports zone scholarship. Courtenay recently received a B.C. Summer Swimming Association Scholarship, has been a swim coach for Special Olympics, and has competed in the B.C. Summer and Winter Games. She was the 2006 junior national gold medallist in modern pentathlon as well as the junior national silver medallist in air pistol. Courtenay is studying science at UCFV and plans to become a research chemist.

Alison Lee is a graduate from Sir Winston Churchill secondary school in Vancouver. She received the Churchill Shield, given to the top all-round student at her high school, as well as the UBC Provost's Scholarship and a Duke of Edinburgh gold award. In high school, Alison was elected to the international baccalaureate student council, and was a national piano finalist in the 2005 Canadian Music Competition. Alison is studying science at UBC and plans to become a doctor.

Jocelyn Light is a graduate from Correlieu secondary school in Quesnel. She received a University of Victoria excellence award, a Governor General's Award and the top academic student award from her high school. She won the Quesnel Aquatic Club Award of Excellence, coached Special Olympics swim teams and was a medallist in the 2006 provincial summer swimming championships. She also played on the Correlieu senior girls' basketball team. Jocelyn is taking general studies at UVic and plans a career in either law or architecture.

Matthew Low is a graduate from Steveston secondary school in Richmond. He received a Governor General's Bronze Medal, a UBC Provost Scholarship, and an HSBC basketball classic scholarship. In high school, Matthew was a Grade 8 camp leader and headed the Christian Fellowship Club for three years. He also excelled in high school sports and won the Steveston Packer Cup for outstanding athletics, leadership and sportsmanship. He has also volunteered at the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, and was a counsellor at summer camp and member of the Richmond Baptist Church worship team. Matthew is studying science at UBC and is considering careers in scientific research or astronomy.

Cara Lozinsky is a graduate from Chatelech secondary school in Sechelt. She received a UBC President's Entrance Scholarship, the Governor General's Bronze Medal and the Mayor's Scholarship. While in high school, Cara worked with Streamkeepers, which focused on sustaining salmon populations and preserving the integrity of local streams and rivers. She also headed the organizing committee for her high school graduation ceremonies, and was a scrutineer during the 2005 provincial election. Cara is studying applied science at UBC and plans to become a civil engineer.

Fritha Munday is a graduate from Parkland secondary school in Sidney. She received a UVic Excellence Scholarship and a Donald and Evelyn Munro Scholarship. Among the awards Fritha received in her graduating year were a Math 12 award, an English 12 award and most outstanding Grade 12 student. While at high school, she studied piano, was a member of the Parkland rowing team and took part in summer camps as a volunteer and counsellor. Fritha is studying humanities and science at UVic and plans to become a pediatrician.

Taya O'Neill is a graduate from North Peace secondary school in Fort St. John. She received a Dennis Youngberg Memorial Scholarship and the Dr. G.G. Westover Memorial Scholarship. In her graduating year, Taya received top scholastic awards in all of her academic subjects, and received a Science Achievement Award in 2006 from the B.C. Innovation Council. She participated in curling as a player and volunteer, was active in student governance and volunteered with the Fort St. John Sunrise Rotary Club. Taya is studying sciences at UNBC and is considering a career in medicine.

Rebecca San is a graduate from Sahali secondary school in Kamloops. She received a Canada Millennium Excellence Award, a UBC President's Entrance Award, the Edith Eleanor Blusson Memorial Scholarship and the Norman MacKenzie Alumni Entrance Scholarship. While at high school, Rebecca helped raise funds for the Kamloops Chinese Freemasons Association and was a math tutor at Summit elementary school. She was also a member of the student council and played on the school volleyball, basketball and soccer teams. Rebecca is studying sciences at UBC and plans to become a pharmacist.

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